

Initially, many observers were hopeful that, at least in the short term, the decade-long civil wars in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia, would be 'suspended' in the wake of the devastating Tsunami waves that hit the region in late December 2004. Three weeks on, and this optimism has been largely shattered by the reality of resuming violence and an escalating war of words between the conflict parties in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In Aceh, there have been many reports of renewed violence and killings since. Rebels and military have levelled accusations against each other of exploiting the disaster situation for their own purposes. In Sri Lanka, things are not much better either. Although Tamil Tiger rebels and the government were initially cooperating in specially formed task forces in rebel-held areas.

What if anything can the international community do? One potentially positive impact could result from imposing some kind of conditionality. The sheer size of the donations that some countries in the West have made may give them some leverage to pressure the conflict parties into constructive negotiations, building on the initial levels of cooperation and focussing on the plight of civilians.